

19th Annual World AIDS Day Statement

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Today, we recognize the 19th annual World AIDS Day; remembering the countless friends and family we have lost in the battle to eradicate HIV/AIDS and renewing our commitment to the fight against this terrible disease.

We stand today at a landmark moment: the prospects of achieving an AIDS-free generation in our lifetime have never been brighter. Over the past two decades, our country has made enormous strides, from the lifting the HIV/AIDS travel ban to the approval of the first over-the-counter home use HIV test, in combating this terrible virus. For the first time in a generation, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the number of new infections within the United States has gone down. Additionally, most countries around the world are reporting stabilizing prevalence rates.

Yet, as someone who lived in the Bay Area and experienced first-hand the beginning of this epidemic, I know the fight is far from over. HIV/AIDS is still a fierce and urgent problem in the United States. There are still over 50,000 people a year who contract the disease in the country. The disease is especially worsening in minority communities. Approximately 44% of new HIV infections are seen in the African American community. An African American woman is 15 times more likely than a Caucasian woman to be infected. Additional work in the Latino and gay and bisexual communities, accounting for 20% and 61% of new infections respectively, confirm similar trends. These populations share the worst access to healthcare, lack of awareness surrounding the disease, and are less likely to use preventative care. To this point, the Asian-American Pacific Islander community, for example, has one of the lowest testing rates in the nation.

These statistics serve as a stark reminder of the importance of reasserting our commitment to fighting this virus. Through better education, prevention, testing, treatment, and research for a cure, I know we can eradicate HIV/AIDS once in for all. I have been a steadfast supporter on the House Appropriations Committee in advocating for additional funding to HIV/AIDS initiatives and will continue to speak out to ensure that we achieve equality and equity in our treatment. I believe we can seize the critical opportunity we have been given and with targeted investments, make this next generation a true AIDS-free generation.